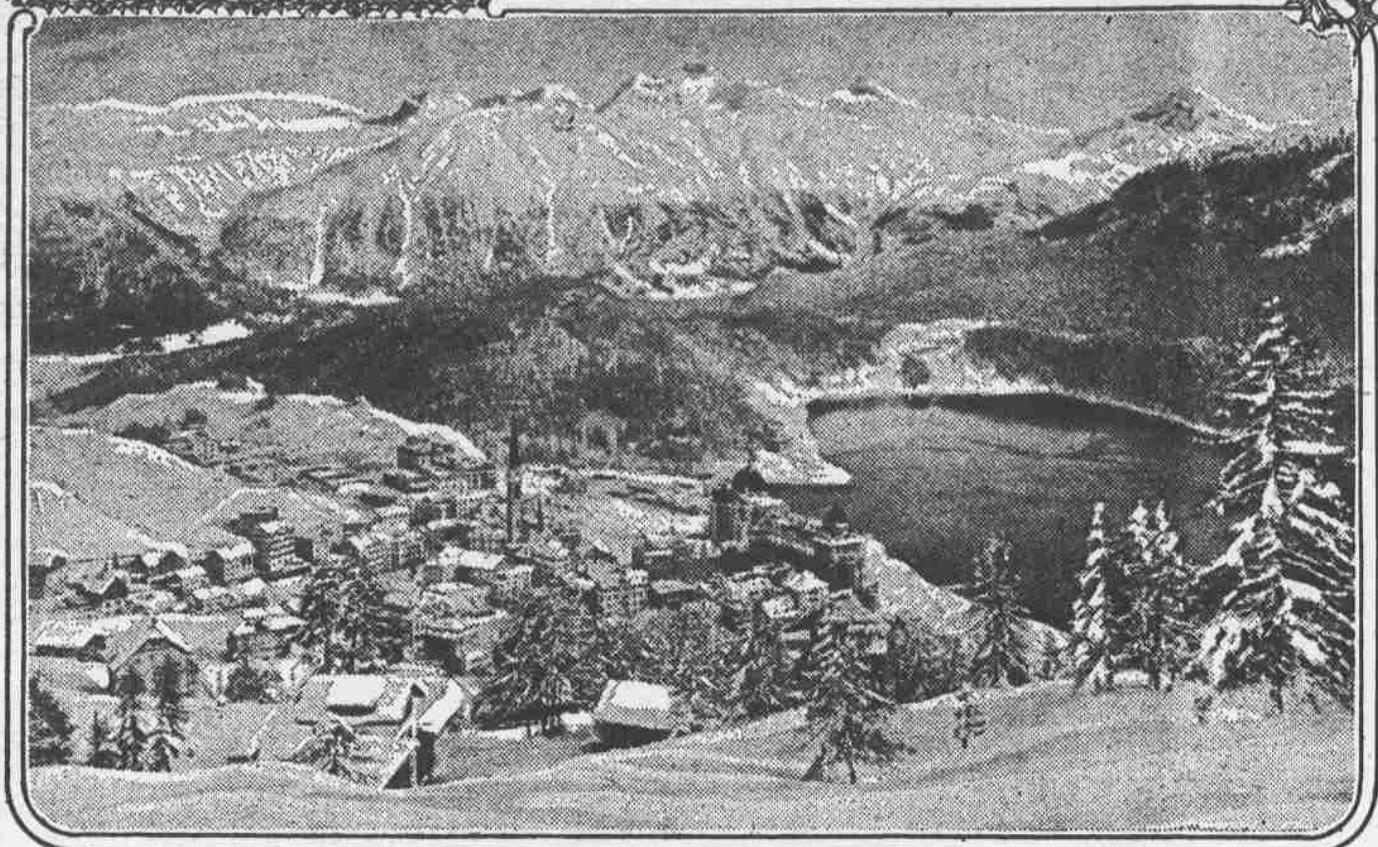


# CHRISTMAS IN THE SWISS ALPS

*While nearly all the rest of Europe is bleeding to death the sturdy citizens of the mountain republic enjoy their glorious winter sports*



NEAR ST. MORITZ, THE FAMOUS RESORT



A SETTING FOR WINTER SPORT

ONLY three years ago the advent of winter in the Swiss Alps was the long expected signal for the city dwellers of all parts of the world to journey forth to that beautiful land, where the season of white is the jolliest time of the year. Then came the war, cruel, devastating and ever-spreading. With wizardlike swiftness Switzerland mobilized her army and ever since the ancient Helvetian republic has been described as "an island of peace in a sea of war."

To those who know her, Switzerland in summer represents a master study in artistic color combinations; Switzerland in winter, however, is a totally different vision, radiant in dazzling, spotless white. Jack Frost has imprinted a silencing kiss upon the babbling lips of every tiny brook and mountain stream, and glistening sheets of the smoothest ice cover also the limpid blue eyes of ponds and Alpine lakes. While mother earth is thus wrapped in a wonderful mantle of ice and snow, the sky above has assumed the matchless hue of a precious sapphire, and the always delicious mountain air seems to have acquired some additional qualities which rejuvenate and strengthen the whole human system and which instill into every being, young or old, an inexplicable feeling of light-hearted happiness. Very shortly, one finds everybody interested and engaged in some form of winter sport.

There is skating, of course, but many games compete now with this oldest of sports on the ice, which has, however, been developed into an art which charms the onlooker by the gracefulness of its movements, and again astonishes by the cool daring of its swift rushes.

As in summer over the lawn, so flies the tennis ball over the ice in the game of hockey. Curlers are frantically sweeping their "stones" toward the coveted goal, and the unlimited diversity of gymnastic stunts offers constant amusement for the players as well as for the onlookers.

The improved appliances for sport requirements have nearly ousted the old-fashioned herdsmen's sleds which are now only occasionally used by timid beginners. The up-to-date vehicle is the so-called skeleton, a low, yard-long toboggan, on which the rider lies flat, steering the craft with hands and feet. Like an arrow, it darts up the ice walls of the curves, and as the bewildered spectator fearfully anticipates an accident, the toboggan shoots down into the furrow and around a beautifully shaped curve.

One of the most attractive and certainly a very social sport is bobsleighbing. Long, low, padded toboggans seating as many as six persons are used and under this heavy burden the bobsleigh shoots down its course with amazing speed. As the leader sways, almost automatically, the close-

ly crowded team bend themselves, so guiding the sleigh to the right or left; they apply a brake by letting themselves drop on the snow, or drive to greater swiftness by bending forward like jockeys. Strong iron spikes which are driven by a lever into the ice enable the leader to stop the vehicle almost instantly, but a sudden application of these brakes whips up the ice and snow in clouds.

Skiing has taken root to an extraordinary extent in Switzerland; even the poorest youth does not want to do without skis, though they might consist of only a couple of crudely adjusted barrel staves. Thanks to the ski, the boys and girls living on remotest situated farms are now able to attend school every day; their parents are no longer isolated for the best part of the long winter months, and, thanks also to the "wooden wings of Norway," the mail and newspapers can be delivered regularly.

Sport is furthermore made easier by the different mountain railways, which in winter run toboggan trains. Thus one can travel a couple of stations upward and arrive at a starting point on a mountain road without exertion and without waste of time. Then one descends to the valley on toboggan, ski or skates, or vice versa, goes down first and returns by train to winter quarters.

Races, competitions, ski excursions, sleigh drives, ice carnivals and an equal variety of fascinating indoor entertainments transplant the happy winter visitor into a totally different world where sorrow and care seem to be banished and where every human being seems to realize that the best life after all is found right next to nature's heart.

But Christmas in Switzerland does not only indicate the time when winter sports are beginning to be at their best; it signifies for the natives a period full of sacred mystery and the anniversary of many a day particularly specified in ancient legends.

In many parts of the country the Yuletide customs and festivities still have their beginning on December 6, which is the anniversary of St. Nicholas. Markets and fairs are then held in villages and cities, and seeing that the old traditions prescribe for this day the purchasing of presents for the children, it is an event of utmost importance to all youngsters. In some districts St. Nicholas parades around in person, in an attire very similar to that of our American Santa Claus, generally carrying a bag filled with apples, prunes, nuts and homemade cookies which he distributes among the children who have been obedient during the year.

The next and in modern days the most important festive day of the whole Yule season is Christmas. History relates that it was only in the year 354 that the Roman Bishop Liberius designated December 25 as the birthday of Christ, as the Romans regarded this particular day as the birthday of the sun, and as they were

furthermore desirous of giving more religious importance to two important Roman festivals which also fell due in the same period. With the observation of Christmas day the Christkindl, described "as a lovely angel with wings," gradually started to take old Santa's place in many sections of Switzerland. Christkindl, the Christ Child, is said to come from the far North and always brings a wonderful Christmas tree, decorated with all the glittering things associated with fairyland and heavily laden with manifold gifts.

A pretty legend about the origin of the Christmas tree tells us that in the beginning of the ninth century a certain St. Winfried went to preach Christianity to the people in Scandinavia and northern Germany. One Christmas eve these people were gathered round a huge oak to offer a human sacrifice, according to the Druid priests, but St. Winfried hewed down the great tree, and as it fell there appeared in its place a tall young fir. When St. Winfried saw it he cried to the people that here was come a new tree, unstained by blood, which, in pointing to the sky, showed them what they were to worship.

"It is the Christ Child," he said. "Carry it to the castle of your chief, and in future, instead of the bloody rites of the Druids, your worship shall be in your own homes, with ceremonies that speak the message of peace and good will to all. A day will come when there shall not be a house in the North wherein on the birthday of Christ the whole family shall not gather together round the fir tree in memory of this day and to the glory of the only God."

In many parts of Switzerland the peasants are still fervent believers in mystic powers and supernatural occurrences which ancient traditions have reported to be prevalent during Christmastime.

And when the happy Christmas days are over, there comes New Year's eve, with its jolly social and family gatherings and its marvelously effective ringing-in of the New Year, when all the church bells throughout the land are lifting up their voices for half an hour.

While Christmas of 1916 will hardly be a general day of rejoicing in many a great country in Europe, Switzerland is preparing to celebrate it in her usual way. There will be less laughter in the valleys and fewer brilliant festivities in the fashionable winter resorts above the clouds. Brotherly love and sympathy for her bleeding neighbors could not will it otherwise, but Switzerland is grateful to the fate which has so far, in spite of everything, been kind to her, and with gratitude and love she will think and take care of her soldiers watching at the front, and she will open wide her already generous heart to the many refugees whom she is sheltering and to the destitute, homeless wanderers passing through the country, to make them feel that Christmas is after all the most wonderful day of the year.

## What's a Family?

It was the dreaded day of examination in arithmetic.

"If anyone has a question to ask," said Miss Bell, "he must come up to me very quietly."

Teddy sat frowning over the third example: "A little girl had a family of dolls. She gave one-fourth of them away and had six left. How many did she give away?"

Suddenly his face cleared. He arose quietly from his seat and tiptoed up to Miss Bell.

"Will you please tell me," he whispered, "how many dolls make a family? I've never heard."

## Preposterous Suggestion.

"John, aren't you going to get an overcoat for the winter?"

"Overcoat!" exclaimed Mr. Miffles. "What do I want with an overcoat? An overcoat won't keep our automobile from freezing up in cold weather."

Anuric cures Backache, Lumbago, Rheumatism. Send 10c. Dr. V. M. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y., for large trial package.—Adv.

## Forbearance.

"How does the theory of evolution impress you?"

"Well, I'm not so sure that I approve of it. I know some men I might suspect of having descended from an orang-outang. But why should I humiliate the orang-outang?"

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## Heredity.

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Wille—Paw, what is egotism?  
Paw—Egotism is an affection of the I, my son.

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You can cure that cold in a day. Take—

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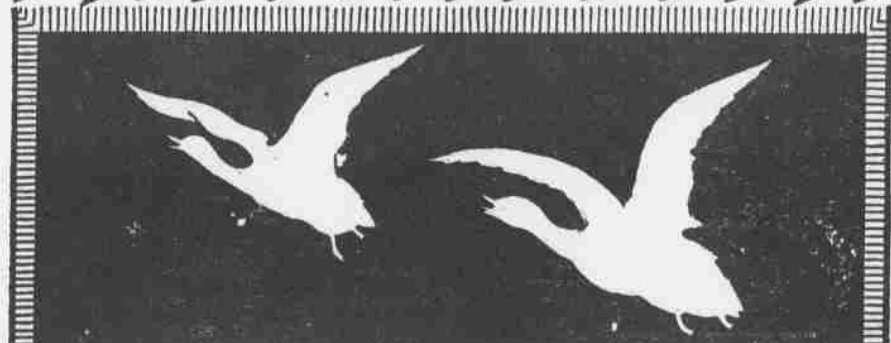
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